

CHINA INCORPORATES TIBET

In 1792 Tibet acknowledged the suzerainty of the Manchu Emperors who had invaded the country early in the century. Under this domination the Tibetans attained an autonomous status. The Chinese Empire was able to maintain only a nominal loose control over Tibet and when the Manchus were overthrown in 1911, Tibet expelled the Chinese troops and representatives. Between then and 1950 the Chinese government did not attempt to exercise control over Tibet, although several attempts were made to incorporate it into China as were the eastern sections and border lands in 1928.

Thus, even in modern history, the Chinese hold over Tibet has always been a very loose one and Tibet's right to autonomy over its internal affairs has been recorded and recognized in a number of international documents.

The situation was succinctly stated by Pandit Nehru, speaking in Madras on 14 April 1959. He said: "We accepted the Chinese overlordship of Tibet and we stand by it. But the Tibetans are not Chinese and I cannot imagine any feasible or practical or happy solution without the autonomy of the Tibetan people."

A degree of autonomy was recognized by China in 1931 when the original constitution of the self-proclaimed Chinese Soviet Republic recognized for national minorities the "right to complete separation from China." Tibet was mentioned as being among those who should "enjoy the full right to self-determination; i.e. they may either join the Union of Chinese Soviets or secede from it and form their own State as they may prefer." Thus the leaders of Communist China officially proclaimed that the status of Tibet should be determined by that country itself.

But this was swiftly to be changed. In 1950, Chinese Communist troops invaded Tibet who appealed in vain to the United Nations. After unsuccessful resistance against overwhelming force, the Tibetans had no recourse but to send a delegation to Peking to negotiate the terms of its official relationship to the Chinese Communist regime.

This resulted in a 17-point Agreement which was signed on 23 May 1951 and acknowledged by the Dalai Lama on 24 October 1951. The main points were as follows:

"In accordance with the policy towards nationalities laid down in the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Tibetan people have the right of exercising regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government.

"The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual.

"The established status, functions and powers of the Panchen Nguerhtheini shall be maintained.

"The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference shall be carried out.

"The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries.

"In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The local government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord....

"The People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall abide by all the above mentioned policies....

"The Central People's Government shall have the centralized handling of all external affairs of the area of Tibet."

Suzerainty, Not Sovereignty

The 1951 Sino-Tibetan Agreement clearly reserved authority over internal affairs to the local Tibet government and delegated control over external affairs to the Central Government. The relationship was one of suzerainty, but not of sovereignty.

The existing political system in all its aspects, the religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people and the monasteries and their income were all fully guaranteed and compulsory reforms in Tibet were explicitly rejected. The Agreement stated that the local government should carry

out its own reforms in accordance with "actual conditions in Tibet."

This was reinforced through the signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet in April 1954. The famed Panch Shila, or the five principles of international cooperation, formed the preamble of this document. These five principles, which also provided the basis for the Bandung Principles, proclaimed by the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 and subscribed to by the Chinese Communist Government, read as follows:

1. Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful coexistence.

Premier Nehru thus recognized Chinese suzerainty, but not sovereignty, over Tibet. It is clear that the Panch Shila and the Bandung Principles, plus other international documents recognizing the freedom of countries from interference in their internal affairs included Tibet.

If any doubt existed as to the legal status of Tibet as proclaimed by the Chinese it was dispelled by their reiteration of Tibet's autonomy. For example, Chou En-lai confirmed the independence of Tibet in its internal affairs when he talked to Nehru in India in 1956. These assurances were recalled by Nehru in a speech he gave before the Indian Parliament in the late spring of 1959.

He declared:

"When Premier Chou En-lai came here two or three years ago, he was good enough to discuss Tibet with me at considerable length. He told me that while Tibet had long been a part of the Chinese State, they did not consider Tibet as a province of China.

"Therefore, they considered Tibet as an autonomous region which would enjoy autonomy. He told me further that it was absurd for anyone to imagine that China was going to force Communism on Tibet."

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted in September 1954 and based on the Common Program adopted in September 1949 by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, is another official document which guarantees the continued existence of national minority groups. The Constitution guarantees that all national minorities living together in compact communities in a given area may exercise their right to regional autonomy. All are free, it says, to use and foster their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own customs and habits. Thus, there is no question in the historical record or in national and international legal documents about Tibet's status as a country and as a national entity, or about its right to exercise authority over its internal affairs.

Contravention of the Sino-Tibet Agreement of 1951 started almost immediately and continued for eight years, culminating in the action dissolving the local government of Tibet. The violation of articles which restricted the internal political structure to the existing local government are indicated in the following examples of actions by the Peking regime.

1. It created a People's Liberation Committee of the Chamdo area, the western half of Sikang Province, in 1951.
2. It created a new governmental committee in Shigatse, the Panchen Kanpo Lija, in competition with the established government in Lhasa in March 1954.
3. In April 1956, it created the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region (PCART).
4. It established membership of the PCART from representatives of the following four bodies: the Tibet local government in Lhasa, the Panchen Kanpo Lija, the People's Liberation Committee of the Chamdo area and the Chinese Communist Party.

The internal authority of the recognized local government of Tibet in Lhasa was first contravened by the creation of two other local government headquarters and diminished further by consolidating nominal government control in the PCART which was ruled in fact by the Communist Party through its Tibet Work Committee.

The Chinese State Council authorization of the PCART in March 1955 leaves no doubt as to the functions of that body. It stated that:

"The Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region will have the nature of a state organ, charged with the responsibility of making preparations to establish the Tibet Autonomous Region and will be directly under the State Council. Its major task is to prepare for regional autonomy in Tibet, as provided in the Constitution and the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet and according to the concrete conditions of Tibet."

The actual power of the PCART rested in the hands of the following representatives of the Central Government, although there were many other Chinese officials on the Committee: General Chang Kuo-hua, Commander of the Communist Tibet Military District; Lieutenant General Tan Kuan-san, deputy secretary of the Party's Tibet Work Committee; Major General Fan Ming, deputy political commissar of the Communist army in Tibet and deputy secretary of the Party's Tibet Work Committee; and Chang Ching-wu, Central Government official representative in Tibet and secretary of the Tibet Work Committee. It was he who arranged for the establishment of the Preparatory Committee in 1956. When Chang Ching-wu is absent, his functions are assumed by Chang Kuo-hua.

While the structure of Tibet's local government was being revised at the highest levels, the Communists were taking over functions that directly affected the daily life of the people. The Liberation Committee of the Chamdo Area, for example, formed local and regional organs and issued orders affecting Lhasa, voided all debts "incurred as a result of former levies," abolished the "feudal service system" of the former government and established trading companies and schools.

It is interesting to note that the Central Government maintains that the Chamdo Area is not in Tibet although the region is inhabited by Tibetans and was once definitely part of Tibet, and despite the fact that the Central Government itself included representatives from the People's Liberation Committee of the Chamdo Area in the PCART.

While the Communists were establishing the additional government units to usurp some of the legitimate functions of the local government headed by the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, officials of the Tibet government were being dismissed by the Central Government. The two premiers, Lukhang and Lobsang Tashi were dismissed; the Cabinet was forced to dissolve its Foreign Affairs Bureau; and in 1953 the Indian press reported that all non-Chinese advisers to the Dalai Lama had been dismissed. The foregoing presents clear evidence of the shift in local government authority in terms of the governmental structure.

On the question of actual control over the internal affairs of Tibet, testimony is available from the highest authority. The Dalai Lama, after years of silence, interspersed only with cautious statements, issued a statement in Tezpur on 18 April 1959, following his escape from the Communist army. In it, he clearly stated that:

"...after the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese armies, the Tibetan Government did not enjoy any measure of autonomy, even in internal matters, and the Chinese Government exercised full powers in Tibetan affairs.

"In 1956 a preparatory committee was set up for Tibet with the Dalai Lama as chairman and the Panchen Lama as vice chairman and General Chang Kuo-hua as the representative of the Chinese Government.

"In practice even this body had little power and decisions in all important matters were taken by the Chinese authorities.

"The Dalai Lama and his Government tried their best to adhere to the 17-point Agreement, but interference of the Chinese authorities persisted."

The frantic efforts of the Communists to counter the evidence contained in this statement included charges that the Dalai Lama was not a free agent and an effort was made to have the charges corroborated by the Panchen Lama, who became a puppet of the Central Government in 1950. The contrast between what the Communists have done in Tibet and the pertinent political articles in the Sino-Tibet Agreement is too glaring to allow any misinterpretation.

Any doubt about the Central Government's intent with regard to the internal autonomy of Tibet and with the maintenance of the traditional character of the people, should have been dispelled by Mao Tse-tung's famous speech, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," given on 27 February 1957.

This speech contains a major Communist statement about "social reforms" in Tibet in the following terms:

"Because conditions in Tibet are not ripe, democratic reforms have not yet been carried out there. According to the 17-point Agreement reached between the Central People's Government and the local Government of Tibet, reform of the social system must eventually be carried out. But we should not be impatient; when this will be done can only be decided when the great majority of the people

of Tibet and their leading public figures consider it practicable. It has now been decided not to proceed with democratic reform in Tibet during the period of the second Five Year Plan (1958-1962) and we can only decide whether it will be done in the period of the third Five Year Plan in the light of the situation obtaining at that time."

Economic and social reforms had been invoked in several areas of Inner Tibet and various preparations for reforms had been made in Tibet proper. Mao's statement to the Tibetans was a clear ultimatum--the Central Government would decide when the reforms would be imposed and it would decide their nature. He was, however, quite firm on the point that the reforms would have to be carried out sooner or later.

Mao made a further clarification in the same speech by saying that "democratic reforms and socialist transformation have, in general, been completed in most of the national minority areas." These minority areas had also been promised that there would be no interference with their traditional pattern of life or with their basic social structure and culture.

Mao's "contradictions" speech was not the first indication that all was not going well in Tibet. Chang Kuo-hua had announced in September 1956 that there would be an alteration in the timetable for Tibet. He said that "democratic reforms" would not be effected for "a comparatively long period to come" as they had to await the acceptance of a majority of Tibetans.

The intention to put the Communist program into at least partial reverse was given more practical attention by Chang Kuo-hua when he said on 22 April 1957:

"...organs set up in the past by the various localities in preparation for carrying out these democratic reforms must...be properly reorganized. An appropriate number of the work personnel of Han [Chinese] nationality who came to help prepare for democratic reforms in Tibet must also be transferred to other areas of the fatherland to take part in socialist construction."

The degree to which the postponement of the reforms was to be honored was thrown into further doubt by Chang's admonition to Tibetans and Chinese to be "constantly on guard against the subversive activities of imperialist elements and the rebellious activities of separatists against the fatherland."

The Seeds of Revolt

In his Tezpur statement, issued after his escape from Tibet, the Dalai Lama revealed that the struggle against engulfment by the Chinese began in 1955. By the end of the year he said "a struggle had started in the Kham Province and this assumed serious proportions in 1956. In the resultant struggle the Chinese armed forces destroyed a large number of monasteries. Many lamas were killed and a large number of monks and officials were taken and employed on the construction of roads in China."

According to resistance leaders, the 1956 uprising against the Chinese started at the town of Dzachuka, northeast of Lhasa. It spread in area, reaching northeast as far as the Kantzu Tibetan Autonomous Chou in Szechwan Province in May and in June and July the fighting swept westward toward Lhasa itself. All reports corroborate the fact that the town and monastery of Litang bore the brunt of the Chinese attack and that a number of other towns and monasteries were bombed. The Statesman of New Delhi of July 1956 confirmed many of the reports and said that the fighting was then raging around Tinga, only 150 miles from Lhasa.

In the intervening three years, fighting against the Chinese appears to have continued in a number of places, led principally by the Khamba tribesmen.

On 20 March 1959, after days of rumor and apprehension, the Indian External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi confirmed reports that the Chinese Communists had fired upon the people in Lhasa in an attempt to put down demonstrations which were described by witnesses as "peaceful." Some 10,000 people had assembled around the Dalai Lama's summer palace in order to prevent him from attending a cultural show at Chinese headquarters because they were fearful that some harm might befall him.

Despite the demonstrations, the Dalai Lama and his Government tried to maintain friendly relations with the Chinese and entered into negotiations to restore peace in Tibet and assuage the people's anxiety. While this was going on, the Chinese lobbed several mortar shells in the direction of the Dalai Lama's palace.

The Communist Maneuver

The events of March 1959 provide the most recent manifestation of Tibetan dissidence with Communist China's efforts to convert Tibet into a Communist society. Since the occupation of 1950, efforts to place Tibet directly under Peking's control and to make Tibetans embrace Communism ranged from subtle pressures on local leaders to the employment of direct force. The

record indicates that the Communists bombed monasteries, killed monks or impressed them into labor brigades, killed women, indiscriminately shot civilian males and forcibly deported Tibetan adults as conscript labor while shipping Tibetan youths to China for "re-education."

These acts display the intention to destroy all Tibetans who oppose the Communist effort. The opposition appears to include the vast majority of the people of Tibet. In view of this, there is no doubt that the Chinese Communists can be adjudged guilty of the international crime of genocide. As the world knows, from the beginning of the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950, the Tibetans have fiercely resisted the occupation power despite the Sino-Tibetan 17-point Agreement which promised administrative autonomy to the country.

Tibetan resistance to Communist China was sparked by the Communists' coordinated political and military policy aimed at the communization of Tibet. A large Communist army, probably of some 100,000 men, established garrisons near major towns and along the borders. Airfields and strategic roads linking Tibet with China were built by gangs of Tibetans who had been forced into labor. In his interview with the press in India in April 1959, the Dalai Lama made specific reference to the Tibetan "martyrs" who had died working on these projects.

Most of the measures taken to communize the country violated the 1951 Agreement. Despite the failure of the Communists to register any success with their program of transforming Tibet into a Communist society, Tibetans came to the realization that the Communist regime threatened their religious institutions and their traditions.

Monks in Forced Labor

During 1957, the Communists continued their efforts at collectivization, resorting to forced labor and campaigns to destroy religious institutions and to undermine religious leaders. During this time the Khamba rebels continued their guerrilla resistance.

After anti-Communist demonstrations in Lhasa on 10 March, armed revolt broke out in the city on 19 March. The uprising of the lay people and monks was suppressed by the Communists who are reported to have bombed several important monasteries and destroyed valuable manuscripts and relics.

Before the full-scale Tibetan uprising in March, the estimate of the number of Tibetan refugees in India was 8,000. By the end of May this number had increased to 21,000. Refugees

reported that the Communists hunted down refugees fleeing to India, killing and wounding a great number of them.

Various items of information regarding killings, imprisonment, deportations and acts of destruction were reported for the first three months of 1959 before the main uprising. Guerrilla leaders reported that eight monasteries were deliberately destroyed by bombing. The eldest brother of the Dalai Lama, Thubten J. Norbu, interviewed at the University of Washington on 24 March, accused the Chinese Communists of having machine-gunned thousands of men, women and children; of destroying monasteries with populations of up to 5,000; and of slaughtering the monks.

As of 4 April, according to a Tibetan wool merchant now a refugee in India, Chinese repression in the Kham Province was ruthless. Monasteries which formerly had 1,000 lamas were reduced to populations of 100. The others were either executed or drafted into forced labor or collective farms. After the revolt in Lhasa, even Khambas who cooperated with the Communists were executed simply because they were Khambas.

Most of the information regarding the suppression of resistance in Tibet was obtained from the border towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. These reports revealed that the Communists shelled many important buildings in Lhasa such as the Dalai Lama's summer palace, the offices of the Tibetan Cabinet, the medical college, the Jokhang cathedral and the Sera and Drepung monasteries. The entire population of Sera and Drepung were reportedly taken into custody for "screening."

The number of Tibetan dead in Lhasa was placed at 2,000 as of 27 March. By the end of that month the Communist army had sealed off the Indian frontier to prevent the escape of Tibetan refugees and guerrillas. Reports at this time also stated that the Communists were shipping Tibetans from Lhasa out of the country in military trucks. Similar deportations were reported in progress at Gyantse and Shigatse.

Information dated 4 April noted the indiscriminate shooting of the Khambas. Lamas reaching Mismari, India, from Dekaung on 14 May stated they had seen Communist machinegun and bombing attacks in the Lhikh area, two days' march southeast of Lhasa. They reported that thousands were attempting to flee Tibet because of the increase in Communist persecution and indoctrination.

In Lhasa, the people's courts were reported to have gone into action by the middle of May. Most of the "defendants" were landowners who were being tried for collaboration with the "reactionaries." They were paraded through the streets in heavy chains on their way to the place of execution.

As of 22 May estimates of the number of Tibetans killed in Lhasa ranged from 5,000 to 10,000 out of a population of some 70,000. About 5,000-10,000 able-bodied men were deported, some to work on the railroad from Siningfu to Lhasa. It is estimated that a total of 200,000 Tibetans had been killed by the Chinese Communists in recent years of fighting.

On the basis of the foregoing examples of ruthless acts by the Communist regime against the Tibetan population over a period of some eight years, the conclusion is inescapable that there was every intention of using violence in order to implement the communization of Tibet.

It is equally inescapable that all these killings, arrests and deportations can only be equated to an outright charge of genocide. This has been done by the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva which on 5 June reported that Chinese Communist acts in Tibet over the past nine years constituted the "crime of genocide" in an attempt to destroy the Tibetan people. A report by this organization representing 35,000 lawyers from 53 nations said that since 1950 the Chinese Communists had killed more than 65,000 Tibetans who had opposed them.

The Commission of Jurists said it would "initiate such action as envisaged by the Genocide Convention of 1948 and by the Charter of the United Nations for suppression of these acts..."

The Commission's report was prepared by Shri Purshottam Trikamdas, senior advocate of the Indian Supreme Court and former secretary to Mohandas Gandhi. Trikamdas said the report, a preliminary one, was based on two months of study of documents and interviews with Tibetan refugees in India.

The report also accused the Chinese of over-running Tibet with 500,000 Chinese immigrants with another four million to come.

Control over Education

A concerted effort is being made in Tibet to subvert the youth of the country through the establishment of a series of schools where they will be indoctrinated in Communism.

In April 1957 Peking announced that some 70 primary schools with accommodation for 6,000 students had been established in various localities in Tibet.

The intent of the program was indicated in the Lhasa newspaper Tibet Jih Pao which said on August 2 1957:

"Last year a number of schools was opened in various places in Tibet. This has a positive function in the development of cultural and educational undertakings in Tibet and the training of skilled persons for building up Tibet. However, certain upper-level personages are even dissatisfied with our opening schools. At the same time the unreasonable phenomenon of drafting people into schools appeared in certain localities, arousing many complaints from the students' parents."

The true aims of the Communist school program were stated by Thubten Nyenjik, Abbot of Gyantse Monastery, in a statement on 20 July 1956. He declared:

"The Chinese have set up schools, but these schools are designed solely for the purpose of the indoctrination of the youth of Tibet with Communist ideas. There is no vocational training and no attempt to familiarize the pupils with their own cultural and religious heritage; in fact, the Chinese are waging a continuous campaign to close all the indigenous schools, none of which has ever taught Chinese. The aim of Chinese education in Tibet is the production of reliable pro-Chinese Communists and this involves nothing short of the wholesale alienation of the Tibetan youth from their own tradition and culture--a tradition and culture that have been noted for their humanity and tolerance and have contributed their just share to the spiritual heritage of Asia and of the world."

The "educational" program by 15 October 1957, according to Tibet Jih Pao, included more than 5,000 local revolutionary cadres of Tibetan nationality, more than 1,000 Communist Party members of Tibetan nationality and more than 2,000 Young Communist League members. At the same time, there were more than 6,000 members of the Patriotic Youth Cultural Association and more than 1,000 members of the Patriotic Women's Association.

No precise figures on the number of Tibetans taken to Communist China for "schooling" are available, but some thousands were trained and returned to Tibet with the army of occupation, prepared to take over governmental positions and to administer "social reforms." In September 1956 Chang Kuo-hua announced plans to recruit between 5,000 and 8,000 students of Tibetan nationality and "to train 10,000 people on a rotation basis."

The youth of Tibet may no longer go to India or other countries for their education. The Chinese Communists have plainly embarked on a program of mass indoctrination of the youth of Tibet in a concerted effort to make sure that all vestiges of the country's age-old culture are eradicated as quickly as possible.